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THE

BELFAST MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

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COMMUNICATIONS, ORIGINAL AND SELECTED.

To the Editor of the Belfast Magazine.

SIR,

HAVING observed in your last No. a paper on the culture of Onions, in which the author appears to me to have fallen into several mistakes, I beg leave to trouble you and the public, with a few remarks on the subject of that production.

Your correspondent observes, that "this practice, now so prevalent, of increasing the extent and diminishing the number of farms is far from being advantageous to the country at large." With respect to the practice being prevalent, I only remark, that the proprietor of a very large estate in the county of Down has adopted a plan, which will be very effectual in preventing farming on a large scale from becoming extremely fashionable. Farms of from thirty to fifty acres, have, within these few years past, been divided and subdivided into holdings of fifteen, ten, and even five acres. This plan is very generally reprobated, both on account of the injury which it is supposed the tenantry will sustain, and the pernicious consequences, which will ultimately be produced to the estate.

As of considerable authority on this subject, I shall take the liberty of making a few extracts from the Farmer's Letters.

"Strange, as it must appear, that the error of subdividing land into small portions, has not long since been corrected; it is still more extraordinary that there are several gentlemen in the north of this kingdom, who, at this very period are dividing and subdividing farms already too small, even farms of thirty or forty acres; and this not altogether to accommodate manufacturers, but a set of poor cottagers, who, occupying six, eight, or ten acres, will call themselves farmers; but who, with propriety, ought to be the farmer's labourers. What can be those gentlemen's motives for this division of their estates into such small portions, I cannot conceive.

"I have indeed heard, that the preposterous motive of encreasing the number of 40*s.* freeholders, has actuated some gentlemen to divide their estates in this manner. But I cannot bring myself to believe, that any gentleman possessed of a liberal mind, can be governed by so detestable a principle, as to wish to influence, and subject to his controul, a set of poor people, whose whole property does not amount to five pounds; or to prefer a tenantry composed of beggars to a wealthy and independent yeomanry. To me it appears clear as noon-day, that one hundred acres of land occupied by ten or fifteen families, would not give, perhaps, much more than one half of the usual products of the soil, which the same quantity of land in the hands of one, or at most two regularly bred farmers, would produce.

"But, Mr. Speculator, what mode of supporting the labouring poor, so proper for this country, as letting them farm small portions of land, by which they may obtain their provisions at a cheap rate, and may, at such times as their farms do not require their attention, employ themselves in some manufacture, or labouring for some gentleman or farmer?" "I answer, from the best observations and from all the inquiries I could possibly make, that the occupiers of small pieces of land do not, in general, procure their food at so low a price as they could, on an average of seasons, purchase it for in the market. It is very commonly, I may say almost universally the case, that the farmers of a few acres, if held at such high rents as are frequently promised for small pieces of land, nay, even at such rents as the farmer of forty acres could afford to pay for the like, that they are perhaps every season compelled to dispose of the greater part of the produce of their farms, immediately after harvest, and to enable them to discharge their rents. Thus we generally find them selling the food raised from their little farms, at that season, which is almost universally the cheapest throughout the year, and with much struggling and difficulty, purchasing the whole of their sustenance in the summer months, when it often bears nearly double the price. Therefore, every attentive observer must perceive, that the very small farms do not promote the interest of either the landlord or tenant."

"There is no arable land in the kingdom of Ireland, so unprofitably employed, nor so abominably managed as the generality of the very small farms in the North; the causes are evident; the owners can never command horses, but at very high expenses, and, at such times only as the farmers have not employment for their cattle on their own grounds; also, the trifling labour which they bestow on their spots of land, is generally a few hours stolen from their usual and regular vocations, and they seldom can command cash to enable them to manure, fence, or in any manner improve their farms."

LETTER II.

A judicious friend has favoured me with the following observations on this subject.

"During the dear summer of 1800, I was a member of the Lisburn committee, which was appointed for the purpose of inquiring into the state of the poor, and issuing tickets to such as were found to be proper objects, in order that they might be supplied with provisions at a moderate price. During the season of scarcity upwards of 20,000*l.* worth of provisions (chiefly oaten meal) were sold to the poor inhabitants of a district of country, more than twelve miles in diameter. On inquiry, I uniformly found, that those trade's people and manufacturers who occupied *small* farms, were in greater distress than those who resided in Lisburn, or even than the Cotters who occupied a house and garden in the country. No circumstance that I recollect, has contributed more to increase the size of farms than the miserable failure of the crop among the small farmers that year. Many of them were obliged to sell their little farms, in order to discharge the debts they had contracted for provisions, which were bought up at a low price by their neighbours, the substantial farmers. Many of them emigrated to America, and others retired into the neighbouring towns, where they enjoy a degree of comfort superior to what they ever experienced in the country. Indeed I have no doubt, that at this day, the trade's people and manufacturers who reside in towns and villages (as is generally the case in England) are more comfortably lodged, clothed and fed, than the same classes who occupy those four or five acres of land in the country."

Your Correspondent informs us, that the improvements which have been introduced, can be adopted only by those, who hold extensive farms. An argument this, surely in favour of extensive cultivation. For if much labour and time be saved by the newly invented machines, this proves the great advantage of farming on an extensive scale. It is well known, that thus, work can be done at a much less expense, and that the same farming utensils which are required for twelve acres would be sufficient for a farm of thirty or even forty acres. So that it must be much more advantageous to farm on a large than on a small scale.

The danger which your Correspondent apprehends from the co-operation of the great landholders, is perfectly ideal. Admitting that the lands in the neighbourhood of a large town were in the possession of a few individuals, can it be supposed that they would be able to regulate the market? Is a large town supplied only from the adjacent farms? Will not farmers take their produce to a considerable distance, or will not purchasers go to a distant market, when it may be had cheaper; and thus, will not the market be immediately brought to its proper level? It would require, Sir, the co-operation of a thousand farmers to make any considerable permanent impression on the market of Belfast.

If large farms be not always best tilled, it is not owing to the mere circumstance of their being large. An extensive farmer has it certainly in his power to cultivate in superior style.

An objection to the general cultivation of onions is, the want of a market. In Dublin, Belfast, or other large towns, there may be a good market for a few cultivators; but were the culture to become general, it is plain, that the market would be overstocked, and the farmer disappointed.

Your Correspondent recommends the saving of the onion seed. May I be permitted to inquire how this is to be done. I have known it attempted but the seed never fully ripened; the seed of the Welsh onion may indeed be saved; but I believe that of the Strasburgh does not come to perfection in this country. If there be any method of saving it, I imagine it is not generally known: and therefore if your friend S. T. can communicate it, he will confer a favour not only on me, but on the public. A. Z.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

ON WAR.

"Styled noble science! in the number rank'd,
Of fair reputed callings, that press round
The door of active life, and court the choice
Of doubtful youth; among the paths that lead
To fame's high fane, among the muses' themes
Placed eminent in front."

FAWCETT'S CIVILIZED WAR.

WAR is an unnatural diseased state of society, and when it once gets deeply seated in the political constitution of a state, like disease in the human body, it gives a wrong direction to all its energies, and by the corruption of its best and most vital parts, endangers the welfare of the entire system. It is the fever of nations, and ranks among its attendant symptoms, *coma, delirium,* &c. and often ends in death. Of its mighty evils, of the miseries and sufferings present and remote, which it brings upon its immediate actors as well as on their innumerable relatives and connections, it is not my design to speak at present. These would fill a volume.

As the powers of the human mind are inadequate to take in a too extensive field of view, it is better in considering an important subject to confine our attention to one or two bearings at a time, that we may not be lost in the immensity of the prospect. At present I design to confine myself to a consideration of the evils which war introduces into private life, even among the classes not professedly military, and especially as the subject is interwoven with the motives which influence the education of youth, and in the adoption of parental plans for the future pursuits in life of their children.

We have now been at war for nearly sixteen years, with the short intermission of a hollow truce. Our habits of thinking and of acting have become military. The plans of many for themselves and their children, have been so formed on a war-system, that much temporary, and in many instances, permanent inconvenience would arise from a return to a peace establishment. This diseased state, was clearly exemplified during the short peace of 1802, when many of our military men had a prospect of returning into private life. What lamentations did we then hear, what inconveniences, real and affected, were then continually repeated! Unhappily for the general interests of mankind, there was but a short time for these complaints to be expressed; the nations again relapsed into the unnatural state of warfare, and individuals returned to reap private emolument from national calamities.

From the sample which we have already seen, we may form some idea of what would take place on a general peace, that would promise durability; and surely we may expect that peace must take place: the ardent philanthropist wishes for its speedy accomplishment, and the cold-blooded politician *calculates* that it must take place, at some period or other. To what eventual inconveniences are parents dooming their chil-